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Affairs of Cuba.

SPEECH

OF

HON. THOMAS SWANN,
OF MARYLAND,

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

JUNE 14, 1870.

The House having under consideration the joint resolution reported by the Committee on Foreign Affairs in relation to Cuba—

MR. SWANN said:

MR. SPEAKER: I regret to find myself separated from my honorable friend from Indiana [Mr. ORTH] and the gentlemen who have united with him in the minority report. It is a source of congratulation, however, to me that we are agreed upon one point; and that is that something must be done for the suffering people of Cuba. I feel also gratified that I am spared the labor which would otherwise have been imposed upon me by the position in which I find myself by the able and exhaustive argument of the honorable gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. BANKS.] He has relieved me of the necessity in presenting the view which I propose to take of this most important question, of going into many of the details which I would have felt bound to exhibit to the House in illustration and defence of the position I have assumed.

Mr. Speaker, for months past the Committee on Foreign Affairs have had under consideration various important memorials which have been referred to them concerning the rights of American citizenship and the duties of this Government in maintaining its relations with foreign powers. Among these was the recognition of neutral rights in Cuba, upon which an elaborate report had been prepared by the honorable chairman of that committee, [Mr. BANKS,] and a day appointed for its discussion in this House. It was not without profound astonishment and regret, on the eve of that discussion, that I witnessed the proceedings of yesterday. The President of the United States, forgetting what was due to the committee and to the dignity of this House, but with a view to anticipate its action, came before us with a message which I will venture to say is without precedent in our past legislative history. It was a deliberate attempt to influence the action of this House; it was an insult to its members and to the country. It was an announcement that the American Congress was incapable of forming a judgment of its own upon great questions of public policy without the advisory aid of the Executive. This message, evidently the work of counsel, contains no new fact which would bring it within the province of the Executive in communicating information to this House. It discloses nothing that was not as well known to the committee as to the President. It was gratuitous and uncalled for in the discharge of any official duty imposed upon him.

The report of the chairman of the committee on the affairs of Cuba having gone forth to the public, it became necessary, in the absence of the requisite intelligence on the part of this House, to break the effect which it was so well calculated to produce; and the President of the United States, taking his position at the Clerk's desk as the advocate of Spain, pours out his budget of as-

sumed facts, illogical inferences, and undigested absurdities upon the patriot cause of Cuba. Did General Grant mean by this novel exhibition to divert public attention from the weakness and imbecility of his past management of our foreign policy? Does he think that the people have forgotten it, or will ever forgive him for it? He tells you that the Spaniards and the insurgents are all barbarians alike, but does he give you any evidence of this beyond the fact that the latter have been driven to the *lex talionis* and a mode of warfare wholly beyond their control as a sheer measure of self-protection? He tells you that the insurgents have no established government; but does he get this from any other than Spanish sources, in whose interest he is speaking? He tells you that there is no formidable opposition to the authority of Spain, and yet he admits that with eighty thousand men and a navy equal to our own, Spain had made no progress up to this time in putting down the rebellion. Is not this evidence of a state of war? He tells you that outrages have been perpetrated upon our citizens. Does he propose any plan of relief in the future beyond the miserable protests and remonstrances of which he speaks, which have emboldened Spain and made him ridiculous? He tells you with a shrug that the patriot government has issued bonds to be used in achieving its independence. Does he not know that the American people did the same thing in their struggle for liberty? He tells you that the declaration of neutrality would entitle Spain to enlarged powers, under the treaty of 1795, and would revive the right of search; but he does not know that that treaty was negotiated to secure freedom from the right of search, and has been so interpreted by the highest judicial tribunal in the country? But apart from this, does he seriously believe that an attempt will ever be made to revive this right, and least of all by a contemptible power like Spain?

Mr. GARFIELD, of Ohio. On what ground does the gentleman say that the President had no right to make a communication of this sort?

Mr. SWANN. I said that pending the discussion of a great question of this sort in the House of Representatives it was unbecoming in the President of the United States to intrude himself into this House for the purpose of controlling its deliberations.

Mr. GARFIELD, of Ohio. I understood the gentleman to deny his right.

Mr. SWANN. I do not deny the right, but I deny the propriety of such a movement on the part of the President of the United States.

Mr. Speaker, this effort of General Grant to intrude himself into the deliberation of this House, and to influence and forestall its legislation to the detriment of a people struggling for liberty, or for any other purpose, is a precedent too dangerous to be viewed without alarm. It should receive an indignant rebuke at the hands of this House. The co-ordinate branches of this Government must be kept distinct and separate. General Grant has no business to appear before us in any such partisan character. He has no right to interfere. No one knows better than he does the condition of things in Cuba, and the insults to which we have been subjected; and to claim that we have no right to correct these evils, even by the application of force, if necessary, is below the standard of American statesmanship and degrading to a nation like this.

Mr. Speaker, this message of the President indicates no fixed policy for the future but that of inactivity and non-interference. He wants the struggling Cubans to lay down their arms and submit to the despotism which is attempted to be fastened upon them. It is no more than we had a right to expect. Our institutions are to continue to be outraged, our commercial relations with Cuba interrupted, and our citizens murdered in cold blood, to say nothing of the war upon humanity which has been going on with such revolting cruelty for months past. No American citizen will be safe in Cuba after this policy has been announced. If we fold our arms in quiet submission, as General Grant recommends, to await the tardy development of events, extending maternal aid and sympathy to Spain in the mean time, as we are doing now, we shall fall beneath the dignity of the weakest power with which we hold intercourse to-day. I had hoped, sir, that we had reached a period when we could stand above the devices which are sometimes resorted to to intimidate weak governments; but the bugbear of a war with Spain, so prominent a feature in General Grant's message,

has caused that high officer to tremble at the very idea of intervention, or the passage of any resolution by this House, and to forget the power and greatness of the nation over which he presides. The American people will sink appalled at the degrading picture which it presents.

The joint resolutions reported by the majority of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, which I hold in my hand, are in the following words:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President of the United States be, and hereby is, authorized and instructed to declare and maintain a strictly impartial neutrality on the part of the Government of the United States in the contest now existing between the people of Cuba and the Government of the kingdom of Spain.

Sec. 2. And be it further resolved, That all provisions of the statute approved 20th of April, 1818, entitled "An act in addition to the act for the punishment of certain crimes against the United States, and to repeal the acts therein mentioned," shall be construed to apply equally to each of the parties in the existing contest between the people of Cuba and the Government of Spain.

Sec. 3. That the President is hereby authorized and requested to remonstrate against the barbarous manner in which the war in Cuba has been conducted, and, if he shall deem it expedient, to solicit the co-operation of other governments in such measures as he may deem necessary to secure from both contending parties an observance of the laws of war recognized by all civilized nations.

The substitute proposed by the minority comprises the following provisions:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That if any person shall, within the limits of the United States, fit out, arm, or equip, or attempt to fit out, arm, or equip, or procure to be fitted out, armed, or equipped, or shall knowingly be concerned in the fitting out, arming, or equipping, of any ship or vessel, with intent that such ship or vessel shall be employed in the service of any European prince or State, for the purpose of subduing American colonists claiming independence, or shall issue or deliver a commission within the territory of the United States for any ship or vessel with the intent that she may be employed as aforesaid, every person so offending shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and, upon conviction thereof, shall be fined in any sum not exceeding five thousand dollars, and be imprisoned for a period not exceeding two years nor less than six months; and every such ship or vessel, with her tackle, apparel, and furniture, together with all materials, arms, ammunition, and stores, which may have been procured for the building and equipment thereof, shall be forfeited, one-half to the use of the informer and the other half to the United States.

Sec. 2. And be it further enacted, That in every case where a ship or vessel shall be fitted out, armed, or equipped, or attempted to be fitted out, armed, or equipped, contrary to the provisions of this act, it shall be lawful for the President of the United States, or such person as he shall have empowered for that purpose, to employ the land or naval forces, or the militia of the United States, or any part thereof, for the purpose of taking possession of and detaining any such ship or vessel.

Sec. 3. And be it further enacted, That the provisions of the act approved April 20, 1818, entitled "An act in addition to the act for the punishment of certain crimes against the United States, and to repeal the acts therein mentioned," shall be held to apply and be in force as to all attempts of American colonies, or parts thereof, to assert their independence; and the words "colonies, districts, or peoples" in such act shall be held to apply to and include all such American colonists claiming independence, as described in the first section of this act.

The leading resolution reported by the majority, in which I cordially concur, proposes to recognize the existence of a state of war in Cuba, and to pledge this Government to a strict neutrality as between the contending powers. In inviting attention to this subject I am quite aware of the responsibility which it imposes upon the committee and upon the House in any action they may deem it their duty to recommend. I have risen with no purpose, therefore, to make a sensation speech. I would allay rather than increase the excitement which the introduction of this subject produced a few days ago upon this floor among gentlemen of both political parties. It cannot have escaped notice that for months past the country has been watching with intense interest every phase in the revolution now going forward in Cuba; and it cannot be doubted for a moment that the sympathies of the American people are with the patriot cause in that abused and oppressed land.

When Spain threw off the yoke of that corrupt dynasty which had brought her government to the verge of ruin, the people of Cuba, sympathizing with the revolution, indulged the hope that with the freedom of the home government a more auspicious future awaited them in the reconstruction which was expected to follow. They had suffered under the rigor of an exacting and absolute despotism, with no voice in the administration of their own affairs; their property held by uncertain tenures, their dearest rights trampled upon and disregarded, and with no appeal from the tyrant sway which had been exercised over them, and which had reduced them almost to the condition of abject slavery. Situated so near our borders, they had caught the inspiration of our free institutions, and had become restless under the disappointments which had attended all their previous efforts at reform. But this dream of a new era in their political condition was, I regret to say, of short duration. The Spanish people had not been educated to understand the value of freedom. It became

necessary that they should decide upon the form of government which was to liberalize their institutions and take the place of that which had been overturned by their efforts. It was a period of intense interest to Cuba. Up to this moment, strange as it would seem, no definite action has been taken; but enough has transpired to justify the inference that Spain has fallen back into her normal condition, and that the prospects of Cuba to-day are even worse than before the revolution took place.

To this cause, Mr. Speaker, we are to attribute the antagonism which has grown up among the natives of that island against the provisional government of Spain, and which has enlisted to so great an extent the sympathies, not only of our people, but of the civilized world.

I am free to confess, Mr. Speaker, that the foreign policy of this Government, if indeed we have any, has not been such as to inspire confidence with any class of our citizens. It has been vacillating, timid, and indecisive. The claims of American citizenship have been lost sight of; war vessels have been fitted out in our waters, under the very eye of the President, to deal unjustly by a people struggling for freedom against despotism and oppression; our claims upon Great Britain for depredations upon our commerce have been postponed without a protest; our citizens have been imprisoned and murdered in cold blood, and we have been compelled to throw ourselves on a memorable occasion upon the good offices of a foreign power to secure to us that protection which was the right and privilege of American citizenship, and which our own Government failed to extend to us.

It is in no spirit of party that I speak thus strongly, and I am happy to find that I am only reflecting the views of prominent gentlemen on the other side of the House. I am not here to deal unjustly with General Grant. I accord to him honesty of purpose, however lame and halting the policy which he has thought proper to adopt. If he has not come up to the standard which the people expected of him, it is a responsibility for which he will be held accountable, and from which no effort of mine would shield him, if I was disposed to act as his champion and defender. If his sympathies had been thrown with the struggling people of Cuba in the early stages of the rebellion, instead of being smothered by the unfriendly and uncalled-for rigor with which he executed the laws of neutrality, Cuba would have been free to-day, and her citizens would have repaid the obligation by the establishment of a government in harmony with our own.

When this subject was before Congress at its last session I expressed my views at large in regard to the proper action of the committee to whom it had been referred from the then stand-point. I was prepared at that time to extend to the people of Cuba the moral support of this Government by the expression of our warmest sympathy in their struggles for freedom. Some of the South American republics had promptly recognized their belligerent rights. It was contended that there was no official evidence of any organized government or any formidable power capable of maintaining itself against the provisional government of Spain, and without the existence of such a government and such a power we had no right to interfere. To a certain extent this was true. Since then, however, the war has gone on without abatement. The whole power of Spain has been brought into requisition to crush the rebellion and restore her relations with her people. Another year has elapsed, and we find Cuba in the same attitude of resistance, hold out against all efforts at subjugation, and Spain, notwithstanding her protestations of triumph, and the pretended subsidence of all organized resistance to her authority, increasing rather than diminishing her armies in that quarter.

It is a significant fact, to which I call the attention of the House, that up to this time, in the face of the telegrams and sensation articles, which have become so frequent of late, heralding the complete success of Spain over her rebellious subjects, there has been no diminution of her force, notwithstanding the enormous expense to which she is subjected from day to day, and which must soon end in the bankruptcy of her treasury, if it has not reached that point already. Spain seems to have gained no decided advantage in the conduct of the war, and the fact is apparent that with the policy upon which the insurgents

are acting, and their fixed determination never to submit to the authority of the mother country, they may hold out without limitation as to time. Are not these facts sufficient to justify a more decided policy on the part of this Government? Is it not conclusive evidence of the state of belligerency for which the friends of Cuba are contending? What the exact condition of the insurgents may be beyond the fact of their formidable numbers it will not be important to inquire. General Jordan, who was before the committee, states upon his honor as a man of truth, that a *bona fide* government, republican in form, has been established in Cuba by the patriots of that island, and is now in full operation; and that the people engaged in the rebellion constitute a very large element of their population; that they have been underrated from the fact that their policy has been one of passive inaction; not to meet the Spaniards in large numbers, or to be drawn into a pitched battle, but to worry them out by a running or guerilla warfare, which may be kept up so long as it may suit their purposes and allow time for other and more formidable combinations. This they believe to be the most effective mode of ultimately accomplishing their independence.

Mr. Speaker, the information which we have obtained heretofore through Spanish sources has been entitled to little credit. Their interest has been to blind and mislead the public mind in regard to the persistence with which Cuba has held out and is still holding out against their immense power. The events of the war have been a sealed letter, so far as they could control them. No important information is permitted to leave the island except under the strictest surveillance, and it is only from some patriot who had evaded the vigilance of the authorities and made good his escape that we are kept posted in regard to what is transpiring from time to time. I have no doubt, from what we know already, that when the veil comes to be lifted we shall have presented to us a picture of tyranny and oppression and human suffering which will be without a parallel in the world's history.

But what is the duty of this Government as the case stands before us to-day? Are we to continue to withhold all expression of sympathy with these struggling people, in the face, too, of the unfriendly spirit which the armies of Spain have manifested toward this Government and the daily outrages upon our citizens? Are we to persevere in this policy of weakness and indecision, which, while it has emboldened Spain to presume upon our forbearance, has entailed incalculable injury upon the patriot cause and the suffering people of Cuba? I am for passing this resolution. I am for proclaiming our strict neutrality as between the belligerents on the island. Our right is indisputable, and my sympathy for the insurgents prompts me to this action. I see no reason why we should help Spain in such a contest; but I do see very great reason why we should extend all the moral aid in our power to a people who are suffering under the yoke of oppression, who are friendly to free government, and desire to follow the example which we have set them. If there is no contending element presenting the proportions that we claim, as Spain would have us believe, our action can do no harm; but if there is, the sympathies of the American people are with Cuba and against Spain, and the sooner she is made to realize it the better.

The outrages upon our citizens, to which I have referred, is a view of this subject to which we cannot shut our eyes. The people of this country demand that the rights of American citizenship shall be respected, not only in Cuba, but throughout the world. Spain has not done this, as the report of the committee abundantly shows. On the contrary, she has permitted or proved herself unable to prevent insults and outrages which the people of this country will submit to no longer. I do not propose to refer in detail to the facts stated in the report of the chairman of the committee showing these acts of wanton insult to American citizens, but I point to them to show the necessity of some action on our part to let Spain know that the American people are not indifferent spectators of these unfriendly acts.

It may be well to allude to the fact that Cuba to-day is virtually in the hands of those who have been sent there to defend it. The volunteers who compose the army are in undisputed possession of the island, hostile alike to Spain and the United States. The Captain General has no recognized authority but to

carry out their wishes and register their edicts. This does not diminish the responsibility of the Spanish Government. These volunteers, composed of men of the most despotic tendencies—desperate in their purposes and their fortunes, and aspiring to the absolute possession of the island at no distant day—have conducted this war in a manner revolting to humanity, and calling for interference in the interest of humanity, if nothing else. But they have committed outrages upon our citizens which Spain, if she was disposed, is unable to prevent. They are awaiting the termination of the war with the insurgents that they may wage war upon Spain, who, powerless now, will be still more prostrate when she finds this force arrayed against her. I refer to this fact to show the complications that are daily assuming importance and which will have to be dealt with in the future.

This Government can make no treaty with such an element, nor can she quietly submit to the existence, at her own door, of a government beyond the pale of civilization, hostile to her free institutions, and a stumbling-block in the way of moral and religious development. The report of the minority refers to the Monroe doctrine and the propriety of its permanent re-enactment as the settled policy of this country. In the main I have no fault to find with it. The Monroe doctrine has answered well its day and generation. It was announced as the policy of this Government when we were in the infancy of our growth. I for one am opposed to any restrictions which that doctrine may impose at the present advanced stage of our national progress. The American people expect that this Government will take its stand among the nations of the earth; first, because she is to-day the most powerful and commanding. She must stretch forth her arm in vindication of the rights of man, whenever and wherever they may be ruthlessly invaded, and lend its protection to suffering humanity, from whatever quarter the appeal may come.

I am not one of those who covet an extension of territory. I do not desire the annexation of Cuba, or any other outlying colony. I am content with what we have. But while I say this, I must say with equal emphasis that I would permit no interference with the great mission upon which we have entered. If Cuba, under the guardianship of Spain, stands in the way the consequences will be with herself. If she persists in the oppression of her people, in the violation of the rights of American citizenship, in the disregard of the common laws of humanity, she must be taught the example which this nation holds out to her. She must recognize the laws of advanced civilization, or she cannot exist long, whether as a province of Spain or an independent power in such close proximity to the American people. Her soil will be invaded in the interest of freedom, and the American flag will float over her in spite of the combined powers of the world.

The report of the minority of the Committee on Foreign Affairs seems to me to arrive at the same conclusion substantially as those reported by the chairman, [Mr. BANKS,] with the single exception that the minority propose to report a bill, general in its character, applying to any future conflict in any American possessions of a European power. It presents, in my judgment, a distinction without a material difference. Such a general law is not necessary to carry out the object proposed by the minority, nor will such a form of law make the action of the committee any more palatable to Spain, if the desire be to avoid her displeasure. The whole object of the majority is the enforcement of the strictest neutrality on the part of this Government between the conflicting powers. If similar cases arise hereafter with other European nations they will be dealt with as circumstances may suggest, and it will be time enough to take up such cases at they occur.

Besides, Mr. Speaker, in reference to other European powers, who have not violated the laws of humanity or acted in an unfriendly spirit toward this Government, I am not disposed to take any present action whatever. I do not see the propriety or advantage of any such general law, nor do I see that the conversion into law of the Monroe doctrine is a matter in which we have any particular interest. The measures reported by both the majority and minority look to neutrality; and this is all that the majority propose. The report of the minority admits that Congress may exercise this power. If Spain takes offence

much more would other European powers take offence, where their relations were friendly to this Government and no good reason existed for such action. I can see no sufficient argument for any such general law. Spain can do as she pleases. If she commits outrages upon humanity and the rights of American citizenship, she can only blame herself for the special legislation which this action proposes.

The minority say:

"We do not deem it necessary to raise any question as to the right of this Government to make a general declaration of neutrality."

They also make a distinction between the right and the duty to do it. Now it occurs to me, Mr. Speaker, that there is too much special pleading and nice refinement in the reasoning of the report of the minority. When they concede "that the policy proposed by them in the present and future cases waives any question of power, character, or prospects of the revolutionary party, that it assumes the right of American countries to self-government, and declares the policy of this Government as not inimical to the assertion of that right in any case," they concede really all that the majority are contending for; and whether their action is in the shape of a general or special law, applying to one or all, does not materially alter the case.

The right of a government to make a declaration of neutrality, as proposed in the resolution of the majority, cannot be questioned for a moment. All the writers upon international law have laid down the rule upon this subject, which cannot well be mistaken. My colleagues in the minority refer to the authority of Mr. Adams in support of the American doctrine. That distinguished publicist says, in his correspondence with Earl Russell:

"If, after the lapse of a reasonable period, there be little prospect of a termination of the struggle, especially if this be carried on upon the ocean, a recognition of the parties as belligerents appears to be justifiable, and at that time, so far as I can ascertain, such a step has never in fact been objected to."

This is sound doctrine, and differs in nowise from the universally recognized precedents upon this subject. The minority further refer to the language of Mr. Dana, in his edition of Wheaton's International Law:

"The occasion for the accordance of belligerent rights arises when a civil conflict exists within a foreign State. The reason which requires and can alone justify this step by the government of another country is that its own rights and interests are so far affected as to require a definition of its own relations to the parties."

The majority are perfectly willing to stand upon the doctrine as laid down in both the extracts to which I have referred. This country has certainly waited a "reasonable period" for the termination of this war in Cuba. That hostilities are still going forward to such an extent, on the part of the insurgents, as to require the whole power of the provisional government to hold it in check, is also a fact which cannot be disputed. If there is no formidable opposition to the government assuming the proportions of war, if the rebellion is at an end, why not at once dismiss the volunteers and send them back to Spain? Mr. Dana's reasoning is equally to the point: "The rights and interests of this Government have been so far affected as to require a definition of its own relations to the parties." The drift of events in Cuba can never be recognized as in accordance with the "interests" of the American people, and the outrages which have been perpetrated upon our own citizens can never receive the sanction of the civilized world. I see no reason, therefore, to object to either of the authorities referred to in the minority report, and have to thank my colleagues for the support they give to the action proposed to be taken by the majority of the committee.

In drawing a distinction between the right of this Government to pass a resolution of strict neutrality between Spain and her oppressed people and the duty imposed upon us to maintain the honor of our flag, the minority of the committee seem to ignore all the facts, startling as they appear in the report of the majority. Have these facts been questioned or denied? What duty can be more imperative than that which looks to the protection of our citizens? Has not this Government forborne long enough? Are our relations with Spain such as to induce us to forego the exercise of any right which attaches under the law of nations, especially when by so doing, in the case of Spain, we throw the weight of our influence in upholding the acts of inhumanity which have marked



the progress of the war? Will any one deny that the struggle for a more potent and free government? Nor am I less surprised that the minority should refer to the "offense" which the adoption of this resolution may give to Spain.

In legislating upon questions affecting the great principles of free government such arguments are humiliating to our national pride. In planting ourselves upon right and justice it is to be presumed that we are prepared to meet any consequences which our action may provoke, and whether offensive to Spain or any other European power, could hardly influence the action of the American Congress. The minority seem to proceed upon the idea that we have no cause of complaint against Spain to justify this declaration of neutrality, as the least rigorous of all the modes of showing our displeasure at her past conduct. Our duty to a suffering people, apart from the outrages to our own citizens, would furnish sufficient ground for the most summary intervention, not only on our part, but that of any civilized power.

"The savage and remorseless spirit in which the Spaniards seek to crush out the Cuban rebellion has made friends for it of multitudes in this country who were indifferent to its success before. When old men like General Goleouria and boys like the sons of President Cespedes; when non-combatants, planters, officers of all ranks, privates by the score, are garroted or shot as soon as they are made captive, it cannot be expected that hearts not made of iron can refuse to sympathize. The cruel and murderous spirit of Spain seems invulnerable to all the humanizing influences of the age. It is indeed one of the few qualities of the Spaniard, that still remind men of the nation which once disputed with the English race the empire of the New World, and which has lost almost everything it ever had but the obstinate and merciless spirit which has driven all its colonies into revolt, and compelled them all except one or two to achieve their independence. As we have over and over said, our Government ought to remonstrate and protest against the barbarous and bloody doings of the Spaniards in Cuba, and without reference to anything else in either the majority or minority report of the committee, we rejoice that Mr. Banks makes such a suggestion. There is no doubt, from what was said long ago in Parliament by a member of Mr. Gladstone's administration, that the British Government would be glad to unite with our own in any measure that might be thought necessary for putting a stop to the atrocious and daily cruelties of the Spaniards to their helpless Cuban captives."—*Baltimore Sun*, June 13.

This question of Cuba, Mr. Speaker, is one which has been exciting the country for months past, and should be disposed of upon some fair basis. Their recognition as in a state of belligerency is all that is asked at our hands; and upon every principle of right and duty I do not see how we can longer withhold it. The idea that such recognition can lead to a war with Spain is simply an absurdity. It is the exercise of an undoubted right, sanctioned by the usage of nations in their relations with each other. But were it otherwise, I should not be intimidated by the probability of any such contingency. The responsibility would be with Spain, and the first gun fired in such a war would give her little to trouble herself about in the future in her relations with that island, or it may be her own continued existence as an independent power.

Mr. Speaker, I do not propose to pursue this subject further. As a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, I felt it due to myself that I should present my views to this House for what they are worth. I am amazed at the utter demoralization into which our foreign policy has fallen since the present administration came into power, when a petty despotism like Spain can insult our flag and murder our citizens with impunity. Protection, sir, is the right of the citizen. It stands at the very base of all government. What are your commerce upon the seas and the immunity of your citizens abroad without it? I have no desire to provoke war in any form or with any people. I deprecate war as the greatest calamity that could befall a nation. But I am free to say that even war, with all its sacrifices, has no terror for me when great principles are involved. I would see this broad land ablaze with excitement from center to circumference, and its great highways alive with moving armies, rather than that the humblest of our citizens should suffer at the hands of foreign arrogance and presumption. We must be vigilant and exacting in demanding justice and repelling insult, if we would retain the confidence of our people. No nation can be great unless she places a proper estimate upon both her power and her obligations of duty.